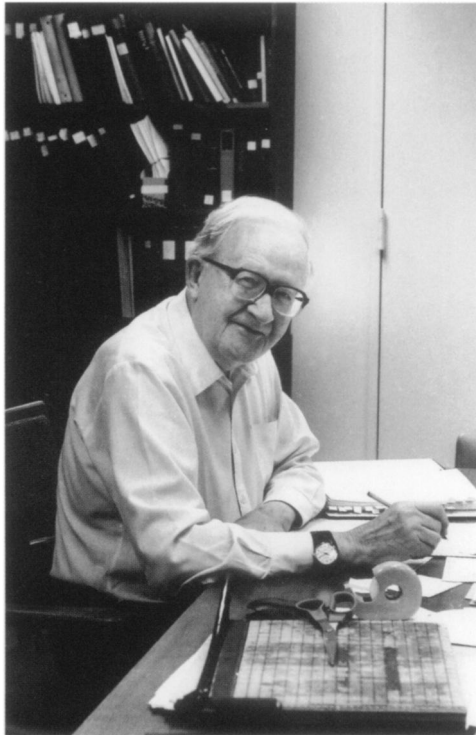


Philip Grierson  
15 November 1910–15 January 2006



Philip Grierson in 1985. Photo by Joe Mills.

**P**HILIP GRIERSON—Fellow of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge; Honorary Keeper of Coins, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge; Professor of Numismatics in the Universities of Cambridge and Brussels; Fellow of the British Academy; member of the Académie royale de Belgique; President of the Royal Numismatic Society (1961–66); and Advisor for Byzantine Numismatics at Dumbarton Oaks from 1955 to 1998—has passed away after a long and extraordinarily full life of 95 years and 2 months. It could be said of him: “I never aged but knew only of several successive youths.”<sup>1</sup> Indeed, until his late eighties he frequently boasted about his exceptional good health and his family’s longevity: he stopped playing squash only at 80, when, according to some malign gossip, he began to risk losing matches on a regular basis. After ascending the 1,400-foot Worcester Beacon peak in 1993, he wrote, “I...pride myself in never being ill,” but supposed that “someday, I’ll begin to feel my age.”<sup>2</sup>

1 Cf. the 1976 speech of Jean Guitton to the Académie Française at [http://www.academie-francaise.fr/immortels/discours\\_reponses/guitton.html](http://www.academie-francaise.fr/immortels/discours_reponses/guitton.html).

2 Personal correspondence.

The responsibilities he assumed and the honors he received in his British and international career were so multifarious, the variety and range of his interests and of his scholarly production so great, that it is impossible either to pay them due tribute or to give them a deserving account. I refer therefore to the obituaries that appeared in the British press immediately after his death, as well as to those published in several historical and numismatic periodicals.<sup>3</sup> In what follows, I focus on Philip Grierson's involvement with Byzantine studies and with Dumbarton Oaks, the two faces of one and the same coin, an important part of the second half of his long life.

### *Grierson as a Byzantine Numismatist before His Association with Dumbarton Oaks*

Grierson's association with Dumbarton Oaks began in the 1950s thanks to a series of what he called "happenstances," all due to his evolution from a traditional historian of Carolingian Europe, especially Flanders, in his prewar youth into a recognized numismatist and pioneer of a new era of Byzantine monetary studies. As he often recalled in the interviews he gave on several anniversaries, or in the "Memoirs" he wrote in 1993 with the avowed aim of saving his obituary writers the trouble of gathering information,<sup>4</sup> it all started with his discovery in his father's desk in January 1945 of a coin he could not identify. When he came back to Cambridge from his Christmas visit to his family in Ireland,

3 British press: 20 January 2006 issues of *The Times* (by P. Spufford), *The Independent* (by C. Brooke), *The Guardian* (by N. McKendrick); historical and numismatic periodicals: *Le Moyen âge* (2006): 449–52 (by C. Morrisson, centered on Grierson's relations with research and teaching in Belgium), *Nordisk Numismatisk Unions Medlemsblad* 2 (2006): 78–81 (by J. S. Jensen), *Rivista Italiana di Numismatica* 107 (2006) (by Lucia Travaini), *Revue numismatique* 162 (2006): 443–47 (by C. Morrisson, centered on Grierson's relations with French scholars and research), *CCNB Newsletter* 37 (March 2006): 6–7 (by M. Blackburn), *Journal of the Oriental Numismatic Society* 187 (Spring 2006): 1–3 (by M. Phillips, centered on Grierson's interests in Islamic numismatics as a scholar and a collector), *Commission Internationale de Numismatique: Compte rendu 2006* (by C. Morrisson), *Rivista di Storia Economica* 22, no. 2 (2006): 267–80 (by L. Travaini). Other obituaries will appear in the *Fitzwilliam Museum Biennial Review*

(2007, by M. Blackburn) and *Speculum* (2007, by M. Blackburn, G. Constable, and M. McCormick).

4 Published interviews: "Some Memories (Interview with Professor Philip Grierson [on His Retirement])," *The Caian* (The Annual Record of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge) (November 1978): 33–55; "A Numismatic Career: Philip Grierson (1910–)," *Numismatic Circular* 99 (1991): 223–24, 259–60, 291–92, 334–36; 100 (1992): 3–4, 43, reprinted in his *Scritti storici e numismatici*, ed. E. A. Arslan and L. Travaini, CISAM, Collectanea 15 (Spoleto, 2001), hereafter cited as "Scritti." The American publication *Contemporary Authors* (vol. 129 [1990]: 177–78) contains a biography in the *Who's Who* format plus "Sidelights," explaining the origin of his interest in coins and the usefulness of their study to scholars. Copies of his unpublished "Memoirs" about his association with Belgium, with Cornell University and the Telluride Association, with other American universities, and with the American

Numismatic Society, and about his work on the collections at Dumbarton Oaks, are kept in the archives of Dumbarton Oaks and the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. An interview with Alice-Mary Talbot about his work and life at Dumbarton Oaks was taped on 23 June 1998, two days before his retirement from his position of Advisor for Byzantine Numismatics. The videotape and transcription are also kept in the Dumbarton Oaks archives. A videotaped interview made in June 2005 in his Cambridge apartment is kept in the Fitzwilliam Museum archive. Excerpts from it are included in the film *Celebration of Philip Grierson's Life*, shown at the Fitzwilliam Museum on 14 March 2006 (DVD copies available from <http://www.fitzwilliammuseum.org/> or [sales@fitzwilliammuseum.org](mailto:sales@fitzwilliammuseum.org)). I have used these various sources as well as my own correspondence with Grierson, now deposited in the Dumbarton Oaks archive, in writing this notice. I am grateful to Alice-Mary Talbot for her help in revising its contents and style.

Charles Seltman identified it as a half follis of Phokas. This spurred him to buy other coins to show to students. On his colleague's advice, he went to Spink's, the well-known coin dealer in London, spent £5 on a handful of coins, and declared he had no intention of becoming a collector. However, in the next two years he added some 3,500 specimens to what would become one of the best general collections of medieval coins in the world, with around 15,000 pieces, now bequeathed to the Fitzwilliam Museum and the basis for the publication of the multivolume series *Medieval European Coinage*, now under preparation.<sup>5</sup>

Grierson's enthusiasm and energy as a collector, combined with an already encyclopaedic knowledge of medieval political history, was put from the start not only to teaching but also to research. Resuming his prewar relations with Belgian scholars, he was invited for several lectures. The paper he delivered in Brussels in 1947 on the decline of the Roman Empire in the light of coin evidence prompted the Université Libre to offer him a professorship "de numismatique et d'histoire de la monnaie" to succeed the recently retired Director of the Bibliothèque Royale, Victor Tourneur; he held this position between 1948 and 1981. His inaugural lecture, "La numismatique et l'histoire," published in 1950 and translated into English the following year,<sup>6</sup> aroused the interest of the president of the American Numismatic Society, Louis C. West, who invited him in 1953 to be the first visiting scholar of the Summer Seminar, which had been founded the previous year and has ever since trained some ten fellows annually in the use of coins as a historical source.<sup>7</sup> Among his first students were David Herlihy and Speros Vryonis. He remained for six months in New York, where the resources of the American Numismatic Society library prompted him to prepare a select bibliography on coins and medals, the basis of his later *Bibliographie numismatique*, which no one since has had the wit, knowledge, or will to update.<sup>8</sup> He returned to New York the following year, sharing the visiting-scholar position with the French archaeologist Henri Seyrig. Among other main speakers invited by the American Numismatic Society was Alfred R. Bellinger (1893–1978), Professor of Latin at Yale, well known for his activity as a cataloguer of ancient coins from the excavations of many sites, including Troy,

5 See Graham Pollard's introduction to the project in P. Grierson and M. Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage*, vol. 1, *The Early Middle Ages (5th–10th Centuries)* (Cambridge, 1986), v–vii.

6 *Revue de l'Université de Bruxelles* 2 (1950): 231–48, and in English as *Numismatics and History*, Historical Association (Great Britain), General Series, G.19 (London, 1951).

7 H. L. Adelson, *The American Numismatic Society, 1858–1958* (New York, 1958), 277, 303–305.

8 *Coins and Medals: A Select Bibliography*, Historical Association, Helps for Students of History 56 (London, 1954); *Bibliographie numismatique*, Cercle d'Etudes numismatiques, Travaux no. 2 (Brussels, 1966); 2nd rev. ed., Travaux no. 9, 1979.

Dura Europos, and Jerash, and for his classification of the Byzantine anonymous folles of the eleventh century. A member of the councils of both the American Numismatic Society and the Dumbarton Oaks Center of Byzantine Studies, he suggested that Grierson should come to Washington to take a look at the coin collection. The reason for this invitation was Grierson's already established reputation in the field of Byzantine numismatics.

### *Grierson's Initial Pathbreaking Studies in Byzantine Numismatics*

Soon after he began collecting, Grierson had started writing on his acquisitions, applying his historical knowledge and critical method to the field of numismatics. His first articles in that discipline (1947–48) concerned South Italian, fourteenth-century German, and late Roman coins.<sup>9</sup> In 1950 came a spate of studies on Byzantine series prompted by his recent purchases, notably of coins of North African provenance that he obtained for little more than the value of their metal.<sup>10</sup> With his usual acumen and skepticism of previously accepted conclusions, he was able to prove that the officina letters at the end of the reverse legend of these particular provincial solidi were an indictional dating introduced under Maurice (582–602) in the mint of Carthage. As a consequence he reattributed to the period of the revolt against Phokas the coins of Herakleios with “consular” legend, most with the effigies of both Herakleioi (the exarch and his son), and bearing dates corresponding to 608–10. He established their minting in Carthage, Alexandria, Cyprus, and Alexandria ad Issum, using the little documentation on their distribution then available. This classification, though challenged by Wolfgang Hahn in some respects, still holds on most points, while the annual dating of the Carthage coins has been shown to apply as well to the earlier issues of Justinian, Justin II, and Tiberius, and has proved to be a fruitful hypothesis.<sup>11</sup>

In 1953, he presented a paper in Paris to the first postwar international numismatic congress on the debasement of the nomisma in the eleventh century, a pioneering application to numismatics of scientific methods, in this case specific gravity measurements, which

9 E.g., “Three Unpublished Coins of Zeno,” *NC*, 6th ser., 8 (1948): 223–26.

10 Four articles under his signature filled almost one fourth of the 1950 issue of *The Numismatic Chronicle* (6th ser., vol. 10): “Dated Solidi of Maurice, Phokas and Heraclius,” pp. 49–69; “The Consular Coinage of ‘Heraclius’ and the Revolt against Phokas of 608–610,” pp. 71–93; “A Barbarous North African Solidus of the Late Seventh

Century,” pp. 301–5; “A Follis of Nicephorus Bryennius (?)” pp. 305–11.

11 C. Morrisson, “Carthage: The *Moneta Auri* under Justinian I and Justin II,” in *Studies in the Early Byzantine Gold Coinage*, ed. W. Hahn and W. E. Metcalf, American Numismatic Society, Numismatic Studies (New York, 1988), 41–64.

demonstrated that the bezant had been tampered with four decades earlier than formerly believed, on the sole basis of the texts and of the color of coins.<sup>12</sup> The study of eleventh-century gold coins also led him to inquire into the interpretation of Nikephoros Phokas's tetarteron and to argue, in one of the metrological *rapprochements* to which he was prone, that the lightweight nomisma had been introduced in the newly reconquered North Syrian provinces to provide a coin adapted to the dinar.<sup>13</sup>

### *Grierson as the "Creator" of the Byzantine Coin Collection at Dumbarton Oaks*

So it came about that Grierson accompanied Alfred Bellinger on a first visit to Dumbarton Oaks in November 1953 and a second time in 1954, when John S. Thacher, Director of Dumbarton Oaks (1946–1969), asked them to report on the Dumbarton Oaks coin collection together with the Whittemore collection of Byzantine coins, which had been bequeathed to the Fogg Museum at Harvard in 1950. As a “good museum man and anxious to acquire anything relevant to Byzantine studies,”<sup>14</sup> Thacher had bought for Dumbarton Oaks the splendid coin cabinet of Hayford Peirce (1883–1946), a longtime friend of Mr. and Mrs. Bliss. Peirce had amassed this series of more than three thousand coins, including outstanding rare issues, mainly on the Paris or Istanbul markets in the 1920s and 1930s. He had used them in preparing the landmark study *Byzantine Art*, which he published in 1926 jointly with another close friend of the Blisses, Royall Tyler, whose role in fostering the founders' interest in Byzantium is well known.<sup>15</sup> The Whittemore series included some three thousand coins also bought primarily in Istanbul or Paris in the same period when Byzantine coins could be acquired for very moderate prices. Together the two assemblages could form the core on which to build a representative Byzantine coin collection. It was Grierson's idea to develop therefrom a world class collection. Felicitously, his proposal was adopted and generously funded by Dumbarton Oaks, which realized that such material could play an important part in its development as a research institute.

In 1955 Grierson was appointed Advisor for Byzantine Numismatics, a title preferred to that of Curator, since he was effectively one, but not

12 “The Debasement of the Nomisma in the Eleventh Century,” in *Congrès International de Numismatique, Paris, 6–11 juillet 1953*, vol. 2, *Actes* (Paris, 1957), 297–98. Full publication in *BZ* 47 (1954): 379–94, supplemented by his “Notes on the Fineness of the Byzantine Solidus,” *BZ* 54

(1961): 91–97.

13 “Nomisma, tetartéron et dinar: Un plaidoyer pour Nicéphore Phocas,” *RBN* 100 (1954): 75–84.

14 Grierson interview with A.-M. Talbot, 23 June 1998.

15 See R. Nelson, “Private Passions Made

Public,” in *Sacred Art, Secular Context: Objects of Art from the Byzantine Collection of Mildred and Robert Woods Bliss*, ed. A. Kirin (Athens, GA, 2005), 39–51.

in permanent residence. From 1955 to 1998 he would come almost every year to Washington for the two-month summer vacation or longer visits.<sup>16</sup> He renounced his former holiday hiking trips in Norway or sightseeing visits in Italy for the sake of an enterprise that became, together with the building of his own collection in Cambridge and its publication in *Medieval European Coinage*, the great achievement of his life. While Bellinger took responsibility for putting the Whittemore coins in order and transferring them to Dumbarton Oaks for study, Grierson began enlarging Dumbarton Oaks's holdings by acquiring several collections en bloc: his own personal cabinet of 519 specimens, which he sold to Dumbarton Oaks to avoid a possible conflict of interest; that of Tommaso Bertelè in 1956 and 1960, with its invaluable series of unpublished Nicaean and Palaiologan coins; and that of Leo Schindler in 1967. As a diplomat in the Italian foreign service, Tommaso Bertelè knew the Blisses and had already contacted Dumbarton Oaks through Royall Tyler in the 1950s with the view that his collection should not be dispersed but be preserved as a whole for scholarly purposes. Building a world-class collection also necessitated buying on the international market, an undertaking facilitated by Grierson's wide connections with European dealers, since he was often offered the coins before they went up for auction. The ten thousand or so coins thus acquired in some eight years required much work on inventory and housekeeping, including the deaccessioning of unwanted duplicates and coins in poor condition.

These tasks occupied most of Grierson's time at Dumbarton Oaks in the 1950s and 1960s, with the help of a series of temporary assistants, but they did not prevent him from publishing in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* or other periodicals preparatory or supplementary articles for the publication of the collections.<sup>17</sup> Besides the continuing flow of his equally important contributions on Western medieval monetary

16 In a letter dated 27 November 1991 he writes, "Although I regard my change of scene as a holiday, it is not really such."

17 "The Date of the Dumbarton Oaks Epiphany Medallion," *DOP* 15 (1961): 221–24 (reprinted in his "Scritti"); "Two Byzantine Coin Hoards of the Seventh and Eighth Centuries at Dumbarton Oaks," *DOP* 19 (1965): 207–28; and much later "Six Late Roman Medallions in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection," *DOP* 50 (1996): 139–45 (repr. in "Scritti"). Since imperial seals were produced in the same state office as coins and are closely related to imperial representations on coins, he also published the exceptional series of Dumbarton Oaks chrysobulls:

"Byzantine Gold Bullae, with a Catalogue of Those at Dumbarton Oaks," *DOP* 20 (1966): 239–53 (repr. in "Scritti"). Among many articles in other periodicals, the following can be cited: "Una ceca bizantina en España," *Numario Hispánico* 4 (1955): 305–14; "The Kyrenia Girdle of Byzantine Medallions and Solidi," *NC*, 6th ser., 15 (1955): 55–70 (repr. in "Scritti"); "Solidi of Phocas and Heraclius: The Chronological Framework," *NC*, 6th ser., 19 (1959): 131–54; "Coins monétaires et off-cines à l'époque du Bas-Empire," *Gazette suisse de numismatique* (1961–62): 1–7; "Die Alterations and Imperial Beards: A Note on the Early Solidi of Constans II and Justinian II," *Numismatic Circular* 70 (1962): 159–60;

"The Date of Constantine VII's Coronation," *Byzantion* 32 (1962): 153–58; "The Miliareseion of Leo III," *Numismatic Circular* 71 (1963): 247; "A Misattributed Miliareseion of Basil II," *ZRV* 8 (1963) = *Mélanges G. Ostrogorsky* 1:111–16; "A Coin of the Emperor Phocas with the Effigy of Maurice," *NC*, 7th ser., 4 (1964): 247–50; "The Copper Coinage of Leo III (717–41) and Constantine V (720–75)," *NC*, 7th ser., 5 (1965): 183–96; "From Solidus to Hyperperon: The Names of Byzantine Gold Coins," *Numismatic Circular* 74 (1966): 123–24; "The Gold and Silver Coinage of Basil II," *ANS Museum Notes* 13 (1967): 167–87.

history and his major articles on numismatic methods,<sup>18</sup> he produced important surveys and original studies that still figure in student syllabi.<sup>19</sup> In 1960 at the eighth Settimana di Studi at Spoleto, devoted to “Moneta e Scambi nell’Alto Medioevo,” he delivered three out of the thirteen published papers, each in a different language.<sup>20</sup> The last of them, “Coinage and Money in the Byzantine Empire, 498–c. 1090,” was the best historical introduction to the subject available in the early 1960s and a major step forward from Wroth’s *British Museum Catalogue* and the collectors’ publications that were the principal reference works at that time.

### *Grierson as a “Non-Byzantinist Byzantine Scholar”*

Despite all these studies and even after the completion of the Dumbarton Oaks coin collection catalogues, Grierson never considered himself a Byzantinist, since his “main historical interests were Western European and not Byzantine.”<sup>21</sup> He was a bridge, however, between East and West, as he was between scholars on both sides of the Atlantic. A telling illustration is provided by his pathbreaking article “The Tombs and Obits of the Byzantine Emperors (537–1042),”<sup>22</sup> whose genesis exemplifies the benefits of immersion in two historical cultures; an indefatigable, curious mind; and the intellectual environment at Dumbarton Oaks. Grierson had met Glanville Downey in Washington in the summer of 1960 and received from him an offprint of his article on the lists of imperial tombs that he had discovered in the Bibliothèque nationale.<sup>23</sup> Working on Lombard coins a few months later, Grierson spotted in the Cambridge library Roberto Cessi’s book on the origins of Italian cities, and found therein the *Chronicon altinate* with a list of emperors, the dates of their deaths, and a descrip-

18 See the reprints in *Dark Age Numismatics*, Variorum Collected Studies 96 (London, 1979) and *Later Medieval Numismatics (11th–16th Centuries)*, Variorum Collected Studies 98 (London, 1979) and, among several preliminary publications on the arrangement of some series, the exemplary demonstration “Nummi Scyphati: The Story of a Misunderstanding,” *NC*, 7th ser., 11 (1971): 253–60.

19 “The Roman Law of Counterfeiting,” in *Essays in Roman Coinage Presented to Harold Mattingly*, ed. R. A. G. Carson and C. H. V. Sutherland (Oxford, 1956), 240–61 (repr. in “Scritti”); “The *Tablettes Albertini* and the Value of the Solidus in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries AD,” *JRS* 49 (1959): 73–80, (repr. in *Dark Age Numismatics*, art. IV); “Commerce in the Dark Ages: A Critique of

the Evidence,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th ser., 9 (1959): 123–40, a famous article reprinted in several collective volumes, including Grierson’s *Dark Age Numismatics*; “The Monetary Reforms of ‘Abd al-Malik: Their Metrological Basis and Their Financial Repercussions,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 3 (1960): 241–64 (repr. in *Dark Age Numismatics*).

20 “Monete bizantine in Italia dal VII all’XI secolo”; “La fonction sociale de la monnaie en Angleterre aux VIIe–VIIIe siècles”; “Coinage and Money in the Byzantine Empire, 498–c. 1090,” in *Moneta e scambi nell’alto medioevo*, VIII Settimana CISAM, 21–27 Aprile 1960 (Spoleto, 1961), 35–55; discussion, 123–63; 341–62; discussion, 363–85; and 411–53. See C. Morrisson,

“Histoire monétaire et numismatique,” *Omaggio al Medioevo: I primi cinquanta anni del Centro Italiano di Studi sull’alto medioevo di Spoleto*, ed. E. Menesto (Spoleto, 2004), 281–301. This anniversary volume includes a leaflet of archive pictures, several of which feature Grierson, a frequent speaker at the Settimane, which he attended regularly until 2001.

21 Interview with A.-M. Talbot, 23 June 1998.

22 *DOP* 16 (1962): 1–60, with a note by C. Mango and I. Ševčenko, 61–63 (reprinted in “Scritti”).

23 G. Downey, “The Tombs of the Byzantine Emperors at the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople,” *JHS* 79 (1959) 27–51.

tion of their sarcophagi, clearly borrowed and clumsily translated from a Greek source, a text unknown to Byzantinists due to the divisions between academic specialties.<sup>24</sup> Another example, less important, of a discovery arising from such crossing of traditional academic frontiers is his elucidation of a curious monogram on an extremely rare silver penny of Charlemagne supposedly from the mint of Ravenna that he resolved, following up a suggestion from the curator of Greek coins in the American Numismatic Society, Margaret Thompson.<sup>25</sup>

### *Grierson as the Leading Author of the Dumbarton Oaks Coin Catalogues*

In 1963, with the collection inventoried and sorted, work on the *Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whittemore Collection* (hereafter, *DOC*) could begin. Having retired from Yale, Alfred Bellinger settled in at Dumbarton Oaks for three years and catalogued the coins from the sixth to the eleventh century. He was anxious to commence publication, so that a volume might be published in time for the quinquennial international congress of Byzantine studies, held September 1966 in Oxford. As is obvious from volume one, *Anastasius I to Maurice: 491–602* (Washington, D.C., 1966), Bellinger's approach was quite different from that of Grierson: the book was conceived in the format of the *British Museum Catalogues*, but limited to brief historical accounts of the events of each reign and short footnotes referring to numismatic literature.<sup>26</sup>

Grierson, on the other hand, wanted to place the coinage in the context of the history of the Byzantine Empire, using the written sources not only for their information on coin values but also on coin names, fitting the issues and their change of types into the chronology of each reign known from written sources, comparing the well-dated numismatic representations with the iconography on other media. With volume two, *Phocas to Theodosius III: 602–717* (1970), Grierson set the standards for the subsequent Dumbarton Oaks and Whittemore collection catalogues, which provide, with their clearly organized historical and numismatic introductions, the ultimate refer-

<sup>24</sup> R. Cessi, *Origo civitatum Italiae seu Venetiarum (Chronicon altinate et Chronicon gradense)* (Rome, 1933).

<sup>25</sup> P. Grierson and M. Thompson, "The Monogram of Charlemagne in Greek," *ANS Museum Notes* 12 (1966): 125–27 (repr. in *Dark Age Numismatics*, art. XIX). The reading of the monogram as a Greek one is now generally accepted but the attribution to Ravenna is not so sure. A counterproposal has been made, transferring the coin to the

*moneta palatina*, considering the recent discovery of a coin with the Greek monogram from the mint of Vienne (Isère) and the context of renewed interest for Greek in the Carolingian court. A. Rovelli, "I denari di Carlo Magno con legenda +CARLVSREX FRETLANGAPATROM e il monogramma greco," *Annali, Istituto Italiano di Numismatica* 50 (2003): 217–25.

<sup>26</sup> Bellinger referred to a few preliminary studies of his own published in the 1960s, but

also repeated some incorrect published and unpublished hypotheses of Grierson going back to the 1950s (e.g., "Matasuntha or Mastinas: A Reattribution," *NC*, 6th ser., 19 [1959]: 119–30, or the unfortunately imaginary mint of Constantine in Numidia, which Grierson had already rightly abandoned, but which still lingers on in the scholarly literature).

ence work on Byzantine coinage of the seventh to fifteenth centuries, complementing Wolfgang Hahn's *Moneta Imperii Byzantini*, authoritative for the earlier period (sixth to seventh centuries).

At Grierson's instigation, the young British scholar Michael Hendy was brought into the cataloguing enterprise. Here he was to play as prominent a role as he would in the study of the Byzantine monetary economy. He first came to Dumbarton Oaks in the summer of 1963 to inventory the difficult Komnenian and later coins, returned to be a fellow from 1965 to 1967 and, relying on his study of the material in Bulgarian museums and on documentation at Dumbarton Oaks, produced in 1969 his landmark *Coinage and Money in the Byzantine Empire (1081–1261)*. In Grierson's words, "Hendy's book created order out of chaos," and, apart from its outstanding historical and numismatic contribution, it would form the basis of *DOC* 4. Due to other commitments, especially his writing of the equally monumental *Studies in the Byzantine Monetary Economy c. 300–1450* (Cambridge, 1985) and other works,<sup>27</sup> Hendy did not complete *DOC* 4 until the mid-1990s and it was published together with *DOC* 5 in 1999. Suffice it here to stress that, with an unusual modesty, Grierson considered his own *DOC* introductions as "large in scale but not all that distinguished in content" compared with Hendy's work on Komnenian coins.<sup>28</sup> He was still of this well-founded opinion in his later years, after the publication of *DOC* 4.

Grierson himself, after producing *DOC* volumes 2 and 3 in 1968 and 1973 in relatively rapid succession, was diverted from his catalogue preparation during his summers at Dumbarton Oaks, not only by his curatorial chores—like the preparation of coin exhibitions and brochures on the occasion of the international numismatic congress (1973) and the international congress of Byzantine Studies (1986), and, above all, the surveillance of the coin inventory requested by the Director of Dumbarton Oaks, Giles Constable—but by two other major projects.<sup>29</sup> The first of these was a book, *Byzantine Coins*, published in 1982 in the new series "Library of Numismatics," a series that he had been asked to edit but that unfortunately terminated after the merger of Methuen with another publisher.<sup>30</sup> This single volume, with its ninety-five plates presenting Dumbarton Oaks coins in chronological and thematic order, provides a fine standard introduction to the material,

27 See Hendy's preface to *DOC* 4, viii–ix.

28 P. Grierson, *The Caian* (Nov. 1978): 47.

29 As a rule, Grierson would try to separate his Byzantine studies in Washington from his Western or other research in Cambridge ("I tend to abandon things Byzantine when I go back to Cambridge").

I consider here only his activity at Dumbarton Oaks.

30 Grierson was able, however, to oversee the publication of important reference volumes in the series, such as Michael Crawford's *Coinage and Money under the Roman Republic* (1985) and Robert Carson's

*Coins of the Roman Empire* (1990). Above all is Otto Mørkholm's posthumous volume, *Early Hellenistic Coinage* (Cambridge, 1991), originally intended for the Methuen series but edited and seen through press in Cambridge by Grierson.

a sort of “pocket version” of *DOC* in which Grierson was able to give a preview of *DOC 5* and test in advance his hypotheses on the still-pending problems of Palaiologan numismatics. The second of these important projects was the *Catalogue of Late Roman Coins* of the fifth century, *DOC Zero* as the authors would humorously call it, because it preceded the first volume of the Byzantine series. Its preparation began in 1985 with the help of the young British numismatist Melinda Mays, and it was published in 1992. Grierson had never been a “delegator” and his *Medieval European Coinage* collaborators, Mark Blackburn and Lucia Travaini, also experienced rough treatment, for he could be “brusque and tactless” and show little understanding for the shortcomings of minds not as sharp and knowledgeable as his own.<sup>31</sup> Although not exempt from such episodes, Grierson’s collaboration with Melinda Mays left only pleasant remembrances for both: following Grierson’s habits, they worked long hours starting between eight and nine in the morning and continuing until eleven or twelve at night, with nineteenth- or twentieth-century music playing on ancient cassette tapes, their work interrupted only for frugal lunches and a walk in the gardens in the afternoon. Grierson amused himself by making up in several languages mock reviews for the book, with imaginary criticisms that became more and more disrespectful and disparaging as the writing of the book advanced.<sup>32</sup> One wonders whether the humor was not apotropaic, masking the author’s anxiety, since at the same time John Kent was finalizing the monumental tenth volume of *Roman Imperial Coinage* (395–491), which appeared in 1994, two years after the publication of the *Catalogue of Late Roman Coins* (*DOC LRE*).<sup>33</sup> *DOC LRE* could not compete in the recording of issues and types with the format of *Roman Imperial Coinage*, but it offered a long-awaited monograph on the complex coinage of the late Roman Empire.

In the 1990s Grierson focused on the completion of the long-delayed *DOC 5*, on the Palaiologan period (1258–1453). In part the time lag can be explained by the different but equally difficult problems posed by the final period of Byzantine monetary history, in the absence of any comprehensive record of these undated coins of ever-changing types and with limited coin-find evidence to help with their dating and mint attribution. Grierson’s increasing involvement in the *Medieval European Coinage* enterprise (vols. 1 [1986], 14 on South Italy [1998]), perhaps compounded by aging and a subconscious fear

31 See Christopher Brooke’s obituary, cited in n. 3.

32 Grierson interview with A.-M. Talbot, 23 June 1998.

33 John Kent was undoubtedly the best numismatic expert on this period. While his

review of *DOC LRE* (*NC* 156 [1996]: 365–81) like many others praised the qualities and clarity of the book, it also included a long list of many more-or-less serious inaccuracies.

of ending his association with Dumbarton Oaks, also helps to account for the twenty-six-year gap before the completion of the series. The protraction allowed Grierson, however, to take full benefit of the important progress in late Byzantine numismatics (post-1261) realized during the second half of the twentieth century, first by Tommaso Bertelè, and then by Simon Bendall, whose acute sense of style, exceptional visual memory, and acquaintance with the material in museums, private collections, and on the market all over Europe and America were, and still are, invaluable. Bendall first came to Dumbarton Oaks in the summer of 1983, to check the arrangement of the Palaiologan coins. His discussion of readings and attributions continued in regular correspondence and Grierson was the first to acknowledge his debt to Bendall's innumerable articles. We must in turn be grateful to Grierson for having put order and clarity into these widely scattered and unsystematic secondary studies,<sup>34</sup> and for having produced an authoritative reference work on the most complex period of Byzantine monetary history, which will be the basis for any future research.

Grierson's greatest contribution to Byzantine studies was without doubt the publication of the catalogue of the Byzantine coins in the Dumbarton Oaks and in the Whittemore collections. He had the largest share in their realization as the author or coauthor of four of the six volumes of a series that encompasses no fewer than some 12,000 coins in 4,000 pages and 378 plates. This accomplishment was celebrated in 1999, a year after he had relinquished the position of numismatic advisor in June 1998 and was named Honorary Associate of Dumbarton Oaks. A colloquium, "Byzantium in the Medieval World: Monetary Transactions and Exchange," was held in his honor (26–27 March 1999), accompanied by a coin exhibit and the publication of a revised and enlarged edition of his brochure on *Byzantine Coinage*.<sup>35</sup> He returned to Dumbarton Oaks once more in November and December 2002, insisting that he should work in the Coin Room to repay the institution's hospitality,<sup>36</sup> and visiting the longtime friends he had made in the Washington area.

34 One can regret, however, that, except in the first plates of *DOC* 5, he did not illustrate coins missing in the collections, as he did in *DOC* 3. A full-reference numismatic handbook or corpus of Palaiologan coinage in a guise adapted from *Moneta Imperii Byzantini* or *Roman Imperial Coinage* is still a desideratum.

35 Most of the papers from the colloquium were published in *DOP* 55 (2001), unfortunately without any mention of their

dedication to Grierson. The exhibit can be viewed online at <http://www.doaks.org/CoinExhibition/First/FirstMain3.html>.

36 He used this time to draft the inventory of Dumbarton Oaks's "supplementary collection," i.e., teaching specimens of the limited holdings of coins of Byzantium's neighbor countries.

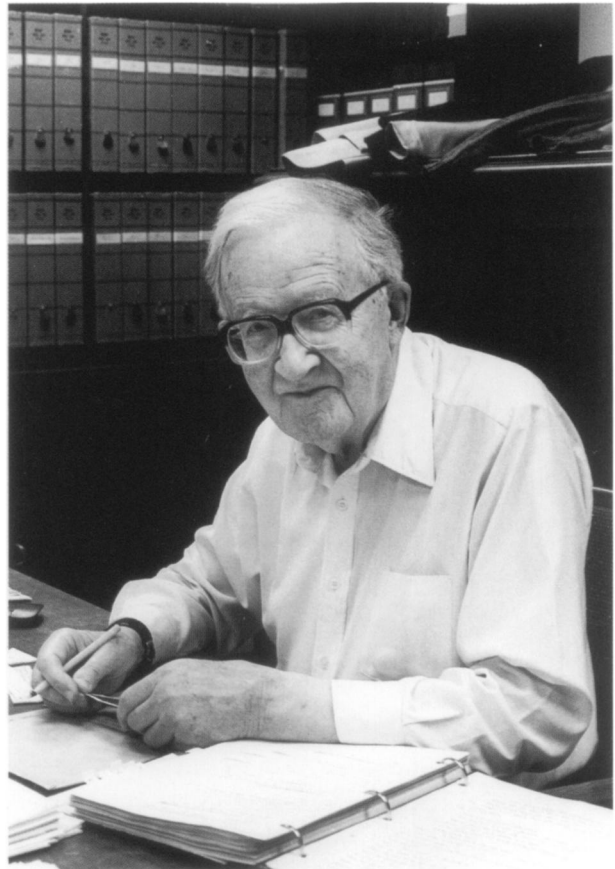
*Dumbarton Oaks as a Second Home for Grierson,  
the Living Memory of the Institution*

Since Grierson paid regular visits for some forty-three years to Dumbarton Oaks, a place that became a second home for him during almost five decades of his life, over the years there he made many friends or acquaintances, whose complete list would sound like a Byzantinists' Almanach de Gotha. He outlived many of them, but retained close ties with members of younger generations. Fidelity to old friends remained a characteristic of his personality down to his final years, and only failing memory prevented him from continuing regular phone calls or correspondence in the last months of his life.

Grierson was the living memory of Dumbarton Oaks and all its transformations throughout the second half of the twentieth century. He remembered having to put on a tie to have tea with Mrs. Bliss and racking his brain to find out who was the "dear Tony" of whom she asked news, only to discover that she meant Sir Anthony Eden.<sup>37</sup> He recalled taking the streetcar to the National Gallery of Art, where the Gulbenkian collection was still on permanent loan, a time when the professors' studies at Dumbarton Oaks were on the third floor of the main house and appallingly hot in summer, and when only fellows and faculty were allowed to take meals in the Fellows Building and were served by waiters in white gloves. Grierson was a legendary raconteur, whose conversation and witty quotes were a highlight of social and everyday life at Dumbarton Oaks, although some found that he tended to hog the limelight, as he himself once complained about Henri Grégoire. The extraordinary variety of his discourse was nourished by his ravenous reading of everything from science fiction or Tolkien to gargantuan historical biographies borrowed weekly from the Georgetown public library.

When the news spread of his passing, all his friends and colleagues concurred in mourning the great loss of a man who for a few was not only a mentor but also a second father. He will continue to live in our memories as an extraordinary scholar, *un grand savant*, a leading figure among twentieth-century historians and numismatists, and above all a faithful friend.

—Cécile Morrisson  
Dumbarton Oaks



Philip Grierson in 1998. Photo by Joe Mills.

37 Grierson interview with A.-M. Talbot, 23 June 1998.